

From Hero of the Counterculture to Risk Assessment: A Consideration of Two Portrayals of the “Psychiatric Patient”

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Abstract

This article is based on a comparative thematic analysis of two novels that explore the experiences of institutional psychiatric care. Ken Kesey's 1962 novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a classic of modern U.S. literature. It is argued here that Kesey's representation of the "psychiatric patient" as rebel was not only a reflection of some the changing societal attitudes in postwar America, but it also helped to shape them. The challenge to the asylum system was thus cast in terms of questions of the civil rights of a marginalized group. The main themes of the novel reflect those of protesters against the abuses of the asylum system—the poor physical conditions, the social isolation of the patients, poor physical care and abuse, and the use of ECT and psychosurgery. The rebellious spirit of Kesey's work is contrasted with a recent novel—Nathan Filer's 2012 award-winning *The Shock of the Fall*. In Filer's work, the optimism and challenge to authority has dissipated to be replaced by a resigned fatalism reflecting the current crisis in mental health services.

Keywords psychiatry, representation, stigma

Introduction

This article explores changing representations of and attitudes to mental illness, psychiatry, and psychiatric patients using a thematic analysis of two novels—Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962) and Nathan Filer’s *The Shock of the Fall* (2012). Media and popular culture representations of groups not only reflect cultural held beliefs and attitudes but also have a potential impact on the way that members of that group are treated. As Hall (1997) notes, there is a process of representation and re-presentation that takes place. This article examines this dynamic in relation to mental illness by developing a comparative thematic analysis of two novels. The article argues that the novels reflect an underlying shift in attitudes to institutionalized care and patients. The shift is a move from seeing the abuses of institutionalized psychiatry as a fundamental question of civil rights to a more resigned acceptance of systemic failings. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* is based on Kesey’s experiences as a nursing assistant on a ward in large psychiatric hospital. It echoes a number of themes of other significant and highly influential works of the time including Goffman’s (1968b): *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmate*. Similar themes were also explored in the literature of the period. Sylvia Plath’s classic novel *The Bell Jar* was published in 1963. The Janet Frame novels *Faces in the Water* and *The Edge of the Alphabet* were published in 1961 and 1962, respectively. The broad themes in these works: the questioning of power—particularly that of the psychiatric profession, challenges to the supposed scientific neutrality of diagnosis and the dehumanizing nature of the asylum regime were all features of the anti-psychiatry of the period. Nathan Filer’s *The Shock of The Fall* is set in the contemporary world of community mental health services. The optimistic vision of community care has disappeared to by a bleak landscape of despair: people at the margins, in poor housing, being supported by embattled staff. The psychiatric patient in this representation is no longer a rebel with a potential to challenge wider social norms. Matthew, the narrator of the novel stills retains some optimism but those around him—in particular the staff—seem to have given up the fight. The progressive values that were meant to be the bedrock of community services have disappeared. There is a significant contrast between the portrayals of staff/patient relationships in the novels. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, the relationship is antagonistic. McMurphy is locked in a battle with Nurse Ratched for control of the ward. *The Shock of The Fall* paints a bleak but more sympathetic portrait of the relationship. The staff that Matthew encounters are not hostile but indifferent. They as much as the patients have become ground down by a system that has lost sight of key values such as respect, dignity, and compassion. They have become trapped in a world of a managerialist approaches focusing on risk assessment and bureaucratic care plans. This article concludes that the reformist and at times almost revolutionary zeal of Kesey’s portrayal was very influential in changing cultural attitudes but this has been lost. Scull (2015, p. 10) argues that “madness” which is often seen as being on the margins or even the negation of civilization has been a major topic for artists from a range of disciplines. Representations of madness and

mental illness are very influential in not only the development of broader societal attitudes but also the response to individuals in crisis (Sief, 2001, Wahl, 2003; Wilson, Nairn, Coverdale, & Panapa, 1999). Despite more liberal social attitudes in many areas, the stigma around mental illness remains powerful. Madness is a challenging and disturbing topic. It both attracts and repels while few, if any, of us do not have a direct family contact with mental illness in some form or another. This article, I will consider the ways in which two novels explore the experiences of being a psychiatric patient and what the differences in these two portrayals reveal about social attitudes in these areas. As Gripsrud (2002) argues, the development of media and cultural studies as discrete academic disciplines is part of the recognition of the role of mass media in everyday life. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) with its focus on the struggle of individual freedom against a repressive society reflects these themes. It remains 60 years after its publication as one of the most influential American novels of the 20th century. Its influence was strengthened by the 1975 film adaptation by Milos Forman, which starred Jack Nicholson in the role of McMurphy. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) with its core theme of the struggle of individual freedom against a repressive society is a seminal text within the development of that culture. The original novel was based on Kesey's experiences as a nursing assistant on a ward in large psychiatric hospital. Kesey had famously been a volunteer in U.S. forces experiments with LSD, which had taken place at the same hospital. The first edition of the novel included sketches of patients that Kesey had drawn while working on the wards. Wolfe (1968) describes how Kesey's experiences on the wards led to him to conclude that the aim of the regime was to keep patients passive. Even though the novel is regarded as a key work of the 1960s, it can be read as a reaction to the conformity of 1950s America (Chenetier, 1996). In this approach, Kesey uses the insane asylum as a metaphor for the paranoia of McCarthyism and what Ginsberg earlier termed "the syndrome of shutdown." The 1975 film adaptation by Milos Forman, which starred Jack Nicholson in the role of McMurphy, strengthened the novel's influence. The film was an outstanding critical and commercial success. It grossed over \$300 million and received nine Oscar nominations. It was the first film to win all five of the major awards: Best Picture, Best Screenplay, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Actress. The theme of the psychiatric patient as a nonconformist or rebel against societal values was a feature of the work of writers such as Laing. It is given greater emphasis in the film helped in part but the Nicholson anti-hero screen persona that had been developed in his earlier appearances, most notably in *Easy Rider* and *Five Easy Pieces*. The struggle between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched is at the heart of the drama. McMurphy challenges her authority at every Cummins 3 opportunity—for example, by ensuring that the group watches the World Series or by running card schools. Time magazine described McMurphy as "A roar of protest against middlebrow society, rules and the rulers who enforce them." The battles between McMurphy and Ratched are at the heart of the novel. McMurphy represents hegemonic masculinity—heterosexual, individualist, and antiauthoritarian. Meloy (2009) argues that Ratched's portrayal—sterile distant and oppressive—is symbolic of the claustrophobic nature of a conformist society. Kesey along with other 1960s novelists

such as Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (1961), portray men of the late 50 s and 60 s as struggling to come to terms with new roles in the postwar period. In the group sessions, the causes of all the men's problems are related to women—for example, Billy Bobbit's relationship with his possessive mother. McMurphy's response to the changes in social roles and sexual mores is a form of hypermasculinity. Women as *Ratched* symbolizes are a threat but also sexually alluring—There are a number of references to her breasts. However, as Meloy (2009) argues, this power is ultimately constructed by Kesey as emasculating. McMurphy consistently refers to *Ratched* as a ball-breaker. She represents to McMurphy's manhood in all senses of the term. McMurphy's final assault on *Ratched* is a sexual violation. The success of the film helped to cement Jack Nicholson as one of, if not, the leading Hollywood actors of his generation. Following on from *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, he seemed to corner the market in playing rebels who cocked a snook at the conformity of American society. The novel has remained in print since publication and is a widely studied set text in schools and colleges. Images from the film have become popular icons of the counter culture or signs of rebellion. The poster and subsequent cover of the DVD release with the classic image of a smiling Nicholson dressed in black features a broken padlock between the double "o" in *Cuckoo*. It also carries the strap line that might have been written by Laing himself, "if he's crazy, what does that make you." Goffman (1968b) had outlined what he termed "degradation ceremonies" whereby individuals who are admitted to "total institutions" are subjected to a series of humiliating rituals so that the staff of the institution can establish control over them. These ceremonies also attempt to remove aspects of a person's individuality so that they will conform. The admission to psychiatric hospital involved being hosed down in the showers by nursing orderlies. McMurphy refuses to submit and turns the hoses on the staff. A still from the film depicting this scene became a greeting card and poster in the United Kingdom. The cultural influence of the novel and the film are clear. They remain two of the most influential cultural representations of psychiatry and psychiatric institutions.

Psychiatry and the Counterculture

The term counterculture is a potentially problematic one. As Farber (2013) suggests, it can both be an aide to the analysis to the cultural shifts that occurred but also be a block. There is the potential to overestimate the influence of the 60 s social changes. The counterculture has been described as a significant political movement that challenged deeply embedded societal structures. Suri (2009) defines it in such a way that almost any group apart from white heterosexual middle-class men were part of it. At the other end of the spectrum, Frank (1997) argues that the counterculture should be understood as a youth movement or style that was very quickly absorbed into the mainstream consumer society. Doyle and Braunstein (2002) conclude that the counterculture was never properly a social movement. It is best understood as a collection of attitudes, fashions, and lifestyles. It, therefore, includes a wide variety of groups including hippies, antiwar protestors, and environmentalists alongside civil rights, feminist, and more traditional anticapitalist political activists. As King (2013) argues, the 1960s—in Britain and the United States—came to be understood by a series of conventional symbols or emblems—the Mini skirt and car. These images are associated with rebellion and challenge to the

established societal norms. Nicholson's portrayal of McMurphy, even though it appeared in 1975, is one of these symbols and an important example of the functions of representation. The early 1960s saw a number of significant and highly influential works which have a similar theme: the questioning of power—particularly that of the psychiatric profession, challenges to the supposed scientific neutrality of diagnosis and the dehumanizing nature of the asylum regime. These works include: Szasz (1963): *The Myth of Mental Illness*, Laing (1959): *The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness*, Fanon (1961): *Les Damnés de la Terre*—preface by Sartre—later published in translation as *The Wretched of the Earth*, M. Foucault (1961): *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*—later published in translation as *Madness and Civilization*. In Richard Yates' *Revolutionary Road* (1961), the character of John Givings, who has been hospitalized, is allowed to voice criticism of the Wheeler's dull suburban lifestyle. Apart from the libertarian Szasz, all these scholars used their critique of psychiatry as the basis or as a metaphor for the wider capitalist society. The psychiatric patient here begins to be seen as part of a possible wider coalition of groups—women, ethnic minorities, gay men and women, and people with disabilities who have been subject to marginalization, oppression, and often institutionalization—that can form the basis of a new progressive politics. There are a number of echoes from Goffman in the themes of the novel and the film. Goffman outlined the process that he called “mortification” whereby individuals become socialized to the “insane surroundings” in which they find themselves. In his study, he emphasized that in a “total institution,” there was a complete divide between staff and patients or residents. One way that the staff established and continued to exert control was by the enforcement of daily rules. The breaking of these rules by patients/residents was then used by staff as evidence that the individual would be unable to cope with life outside the institution. Fowler (1977) used the term *mind style* to describe the process by which the language of a text projects a particular view of the world. Both novels under discussion here are first-person narratives. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is narrated by Chief Bromden who describes the ward as a factory. This factory is part of the Combine, that is, a world that demands conformity. Kesey's work is part of the radical criticism of what was viewed of the essentially moral emptiness of the postwar consumer society. Chief Bromden narrates the events of the novel. He has feigned deafness and is mute. This along with his physical size and the fact that he is the son of a Native American and a white woman means that he remains on the margins. He is able to view events on the ward but until the arrival of McMurphy, he is largely ignored by other patients and the staff. Bromden is an unreliable narrator. One of the questions that the reader has to consider is how much of what he views should be seen through a prism of illness. For example, Chief describes an image of assistants on the ward having sex but clearing up before he can catch them. The fragmentary, hallucinatory nature of the prose means that it is never clear if these or similar events actually take place. Bromden sees the world as run by what he calls the Combine. Bromden worked as an electrician's assistant in World War II. He was traumatized in an air raid in Germany. This is emphasized by his intermittent sense of disorientation. He feels that Nurse Ratched operates a fog machine which

clouds his and the other patients' minds. Bromden sees his fellow patients as faulty machines that need to be repaired. The role of the hospital is to "fix" people so that they can return to the world. Bromden sees treatment as the repair of mechanical parts. The recurring machine metaphors add to Bromden's sense that he is being controlled in some ways. The patients are divided into two groups—Acutes and Chronics. For Bromden, the Acutes can still be "fixed" whereas the Chronics are simply beyond repair. The machine metaphor makes a clear link between the psychiatric ward and the wider world of postwar United States. The measure of whether a patient is "cured" is whether they become a model citizen and worker. A key claim of the counterculture was the essentially dehumanizing nature of work and the way that it strips people of individualism. McMurphy embodies the rebellious spirit of the 1960s counterculture. He questions and challenges authority in all its forms. When he arrives on the ward, he thinks that he has manipulated the authorities in to admitting him. This new environment will be an easier one than the prison farm with more opportunities to scam the patients. McMurphy is a rebel but he is a largely self-serving one. His main objection to most of the petty rules and routine seems to be that they get in the way of his moneymaking schemes. However, he also represents a free spirit and humanity that is largely lacking or repressed in the hospital regime. Bromden sees McMurphy as being outside of the control of the Combine that will ultimately destroy him. It is possible to read the novel as a clash between two main characters— McMurphy and Nurse Ratched—for control over the ward. McMurphy has engineered his transfer to the ward as he sees the regime as much easier than the prison farm. McMurphy has been sentenced for statutory rape—sex with an underage girl. It is a sign of changing social attitudes that this has been largely downplayed or ignored in discussions of the novel. McMurphy represents individualism and freedom in a battle with Nurse Ratched who embodies social conformity. The theme of the psychiatric patient as a nonconformist or rebel against societal values was a feature of the work of writers such as Laing. The struggle between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched is at the heart of the drama. McMurphy challenges her authority at every opportunity—for example, by ensuring that the group watches the World Series or by running card schools. McMurphy is particularly shocked when he realizes that the other patients have admitted themselves voluntarily to the hospital. He has been transferred from prison—thus making the initial distance between himself and the other patients even greater. The novel also emphasizes the social isolation of psychiatric patients and the ways that this feeds stigma and the wider society's fear of them as a group. These attitudes are also internalized. McMurphy acts as a catalyst to challenge these views. Set pieces in the novel such as the fishing trip or the party McMurphy organizes on the ward emphasize this theme. Nurse Ratched is a dominant authority figure on the ward. The work of Goffman (1968a) and Rosenhahn's (1975) famous pseudo patient experiment revealed, that on many occasions, psychiatrists were peripheral to the day to-day management of the ward. In the novel, McMurphy sees the doctor as a potential ally for change. However, Nurse Ratched by intimidating staff and patients is able to block any moves to a more liberal regime. It is interesting to note that the ward in the novel, which has come to represent all that is

wrong with in patient care, actually contained a number of more progressive elements. It has a range of activities and counselling available that was lacking in state mental institutions. Scull (2015) outlines the way that the appalling, often insanitary conditions, in the institutions of the 1940s, were revealed by conscientious objectors who worked as nursing orderlies. However, one of the most powerful and dominant images of the novel is the use of ECT and psychosurgery explicitly as forms of punishment and control. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is shot through with the spirit of 1960s antipsychiatry. One of the key features of that movement is the questioning of diagnosis but also the idea that psychiatry was a form of social control—not a humanitarian intervention aimed at relieving distress. The ultimate acts of control here are the use of ECT and the lobotomy. In the climax of the novel, McMurphy is lobotomized following an attack on Nurse Ratched. Chief Bromden then suffocates McMurphy as he cannot bear to see this free spirit living such an existence. Nurse Ratched and the black nursing assistants are portrayed as controlling the ward in the same way that powerful forces control individuals and society. The novel has been criticized for its racism and sexism. Nurse Ratched, in particular, is a caricature of powerful but sexually Cummins 7 repressed woman. In McMurphy's terms, "a bitch, and a buzzard and a ballcutter" (Kesey, 1962, p. 58). The black nursing assistants are marginal figures who do her bidding. It is deeply ironic that women and people of color are used as symbols of a repressive society—two groups that certainly did not enjoy the full rights of citizenship in late-50 s America. They are also two groups that have suffered more than most in mental health services. *The Shock of the Fall* and "Community Care." From the 1980s onward in the United Kingdom, the large institutions such as those portrayed in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were closed. The community-based services that were meant to replace them, never really materialized. For Scull, the consequences of this policy have been an unmitigated disaster for the mentally ill people, who have been abandoned in "deviant ghettos". The origins of community care lay in an attempt to improve the care of one of the most marginalized groups in society. Whatever, the original motives behind the establishment of the asylums, it was clear by the 1980s, and they were no longer sustainable. This was not only on the grounds of the largely inadequate care that was provided but also as was made explicit in the NHS + Community Care Act (1990). The economic policies of the government of the time meant that new funding arrangements were demanded. *The Shock of the Fall* has to be read against a backdrop of the failure of mental policies of the 1980s and 1990s to develop adequate community-based alternatives to institutionalized care (Cummins, 2011a; Mental Health Foundation, 1994; Murphy, 1991). The media reports of the implementation of the hospital closure program virtually based on all cases of homicide or serious injury (Cummins, 2011a). A moral panic (Cohen, 2011) developed which led to the introduction of more forms of accountability and surveillance, in the broadest sense of patients (Cummins, 2013). *The Shock of the Fall* (Filer, 2012) was awarded the Costa Book Award in 2013. It is Nathan Filer's first novel. Filer based his novel on his experiences of working as a psychiatric nurse. The novel tells the story of Matt Holmes. Matt is 19 years old and diagnosed with

schizophrenia. He has been “sectioned”—detained against his will under the Mental Health Act (1983) in a local psychiatric unit. Matt is admitted to hospital as he has struggled to cope living alone in a flat. He is haunted by the death of his elder brother Simon, who had Down’s Syndrome and died during a family camping holiday. The novel begins with a partial narrative of these events. It is only at the end of the novel that we discover the full circumstances and why Matt feels such unresolved and ongoing guilt. The Shock of the Fall is Simon’s death and its subsequent impact. Moon (2000) argues there is a geographical paradox at the heart of the development of community care services. As several commentators note (Scully, 1989), the asylums were based on seclusion and concealment. The institutions served to cut off this group from the wider population. The experience of being a patient was potentially so damaging that you might not ever resume your former social role. However, the move toward community care has not challenged this. In fact, as Wolff (2005) suggests, the patterns of social isolation have almost been reproduced in the community. Those with the most complex needs are often found living in the poorest neighborhoods, in poor quality residential care homes, on the streets, or increasingly in the prison system (Moon, 2000; Singleton, Meltzer, & Gatward, 1998). The overall picture is a very bleak one, so bleak in fact that the asylum system appears to have some advantages in that it was, at least, a community of sorts. The above forms the backdrop to the events of *The Shock of the Fall*. Matthew is 19 and suffering from a psychotic breakdown linked to the death of his younger brother in a childhood accident and the impact of grief is a key theme of the book. Matthew’s mother, in particular, is presented in subtle and moving ways. Matthew is tortured by his own role in the accident and guilt. But unlike the antihero McMurphy who rebels very openly against the system, the focus here is the way those around Matthew fail to understand the roots of his suffering. The novel brings to life the landscape of despair: people at the margins, in poor housing, being supported by embattled staff with diminishing options but forced into a managerialist approach of risk assessment and bureaucratic care plans. Matthew finishes his memoir just in time as the day center where he writes it is closed as part of a program of spending cuts. *The Shock of the Fall* is a troubling read. Matthew’s experiences of being a psychiatric patient either in hospital or living in the community are recounted in quietly disturbing detail. Matthew mocks the way that services and professionals have lost sight of individuals, for whom, are they are caring. As with *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, the reader has to consider the potential impact of mental illness on the narration. Matthew often addresses the reader directly “I can only describe reality as I know it. I am doing my best, and promise to keep trying.” The novel is presented in an interesting way with drawings, varying typefaces, letters from professionals, and medical notes. Matthew recognizes that he can appear as an intimidating character—he is tall and wears army camouflage gear. He also acknowledges that he behaves in strange and disturbing ways—talking to the voice of his dead brother. There is a strong vein of humor in the novel. In particular, Filer superbly parodies the bureaucratic language that the mental health professionals use—“Matthew...suffers from command hallucinations, which he attributes to his dead sibling. Crazy shit eh?” One striking feature is the way that all of

his behavior is seen through the prism of mental illness— There are echoes of Rosenhahn’s findings here. Matthew mocks the pomposity of professional jargon— “Patient is engaging behaviour. Between you and me, I might take a shit in a bit. Is that engaging in shitting behaviour?” Life on the ward is a dull routine—when Matthew is living in his flat it is not that different. He repeatedly complains that “There is literally nothing to do.” There is a lack of real human contact between the patients and the staff. The staff become ciphers, for example, the narrator gives the nursing staff names a series of names such as Claire or maybe Anna. Filer’s experiences as a mental health nurse mean that the scenes on the ward—the poor food, the rundown psychical state of the unit, the lack of activity, the use of jargon, the emphasis on form filling, and the feeling that the patients are being managed in a bureaucratic way—are drawn in fine detail. Matthew is particularly upset by the promotional ware from drug companies that is everywhere in the unit. Last time I went into the office to borrow the Nursing Dictionary, I counted three mugs, a mouse mat, a bunch of pens, two Post-It note booklets and the wall clock—all sporting the brands of different medicines. It’s like being in prison and having to look at adverts for fucking locks. This could never be described as a sentimental work. However, Matthew is a resilient character. His parents and his grandmother clearly love him dearly. They try desperately to help him cope with the impact of the loss of his brother and the impact of mental illness. At the end of the novel, we are told that Matthew has been back in hospital and will be again.

Conclusion Cross (2010) emphasizes the continuing influence of representations of “madness.” These notions are transmitted through a range of popular cultural forms— song, film, TV drama, and so on. Historically, physical representations of the “mad” emphasized wild hair and physical size as signs of their irrationality and uncontrollability. McMurphy represents a counterpoint to this. In Kesey’s novel and the subsequent Forman film, McMurphy is a rebel. A liberating force who challenges the conformist values of society. His fellow patients come to realize that rather than a therapeutic regime the asylum is a corrosive one. The attempts within the hospital to establish some form of therapeutic community are a sham. All the decisions in ward meetings are effectively made by Nurse Ratched until McMurphy arrives. McMurphy is solely acting for himself to make money out of the other patients. Kesey’s portrait of institutionalized psychiatric care has been very influential. The closed nature of these institutions, the lack of civil rights or protections for inmates, and their resulting lack of status combined to produce the inherently abusive nature of the asylum regimes (Scull, 2015). However, Kesey’s wider attack on the failings of institutionalized psychiatry remains a powerful influence. The novel itself was part of the wider movement that led to the closure of the institutions where the novel is set. Kesey’s work revolves around notions of individual freedom. There is no real acceptance that any of the inpatients might actually be ill or distressed. The roots of their difficulties are in the wider society. The thing that they all have in common is that they do not conform in some way or another to the values of the wider society. McMurphy leads a rebellion of sorts but that is crushed. He becomes a martyr or Christ-like figure. The development of community care led to a significant shift in the portrayal of the “psychiatric patient.” Concern about

issues of civil rights or dignity were pushed into the background. Media representations of madness particularly those in the tabloid press or popular culture much more focused on cases where mentally ill people have committed acts of violence. This is a modern recasting of deeply engrained and powerful stereotypes that link mental illness and violence (Cummins 2011a). *The Shock of the Fall* is a portrait of an individual struggling to cope not only with the impact of mental distress but also the collapsing services that are meant to assist him. The failings of institutionalized psychiatry that Kesey outlined recur in Filer's dissection of a modern mental unit. However, there is no sense of rebellion. Matthew cannot rebel against a Nurse Ratched figure because one does not exist. There is no hostility between patients and staff. Both groups seemed trapped by the bureaucracy of modern mental health services with its emphasis on forms and risk assessment procedures. Neither side really believes in these systems or the language of empowerment and patients' rights that underpins them. The focus for those caring for Matthew remains his compliance with antipsychotic medication. There have been hugely significant changes in the structure and provision of mental health services since Kesey has wrote his seminal novel. Social attitudes to mental illness have shifted. The focus of mental health care has moved away from institutional models. In the United Kingdom, people with mental health problems now have legal protections against discrimination in areas such as housing and employment that are a stark contrast to patients in institutions who were effectively deprived of the fundamental rights of citizenship. Despite these changes, stigma and marginalization remains. This may be part of the explanation for the ongoing of Kesey's work. In both novels, the main characters are struggling to create or maintain an identity other than that of patient. McMurphy has to do so in the face of a concerted campaign to destroy it. Matthew on the other hand faces indifference from professional who are overwhelmed by organizational dysfunction. Unlike the antihero McMurphy who rebels very openly against the system, the focus in *The Shock of the Fall* is the way those around Matthew fail to understand the roots of his suffering. The rebellious optimism of Kesey's work has been replaced by a more resigned fatalism. Filer's novel reflects the failings of the policy of community care—a policy partly inspired by and reflecting the values that form the core themes of Kesey's novel.

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